
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION

Contact: *Brian Gorman, NMFS*
(206) 526-6613
Crystal Ball, BPA
(503) 230-5133
Clare Perry, Corps of Engineers
(503) 808-3710

NOAA 99-R160
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 16, 1999

**Federal Agencies Release Four-H "Working Paper"
on Salmon Recovery in Pacific Northwest**

Saying that extinction risks for several salmon populations are "significant," the nine federal agencies with Northwest salmon recovery responsibility released their Four-H working paper today, outlining a range of alternatives that, if implemented, could lead to salmon recovery.

The Four Hs refer to human activities that harm salmon: habitat degradation, harvest activities, hatchery production and hydropower operations. The 16-page working paper summarizes the effect of those activities on each stage of the salmon life cycle. The paper also reviews important new scientific information showing the relative importance of various changes in the Hs and how those changes might contribute to the overall goal of recovery.

"This paper was written with two major goals in mind: to lay out the basic options for salmon recovery and to stimulate a constructive debate among the governments and the people of the region on those options," said William Stelle, head of the National Marine Fisheries Service's Northwest region and the lead agency in developing the paper.

"Our job is to get the science right and to help foster a serious regional debate on the choices that must be made if we are going to restore salmon runs in the Columbia Basin," Stelle added. "That honest debate holds the best hope for a durable set of commitments to recover salmon stocks and the health of the rivers they depend on."

"We indeed have some very tough choices ahead," Stelle concluded, "but I'm absolutely convinced that the goal of saving salmon is bigger than any differences that may exist in the region."

(more)

Instead of laying out prescribed rules that must be followed to achieve salmon recovery, the Four-H report sets some broad goals -- avoiding extinction and minimizing adverse effects on humans, for example -- and then describes options to achieve these goals by making changes to human activities within each of the four Hs.

The paper then combines various options from among those salmon-harming factors into what it calls "integrated alternatives." These alternatives, ranging from aggressive to relatively modest, are all aimed at bringing about salmon recovery, but some will work faster and with a higher degree of certainty than others.

The alternatives are intended to illustrate the need for a comprehensive approach among the four Hs to ensure that salmon recovery efforts work. The options also illustrate the very real tradeoffs among the four Hs that must be made in choosing among those alternatives. The paper cautions that there are certainly other combinations of actions under which recovery could be achieved.

The full Four-H draft document, with an expanded scientific analysis of how values for the various options were arrived at, is expected to be released in mid-December. The scientific analysis will focus on three of the four federally protected salmon populations on the lower Snake River.

Beginning in December, the nine agencies will be asking for public comment on the report and the options it presents. In January, February and March, public meetings will be scheduled throughout the region to discuss this and related documents, including the Army Corps of Engineers' draft environmental impact statement on salmon passage improvements, including dam breaching, in the lower Snake.

The nine federal agencies -- known collectively as the Federal Caucus -- responsible for today's Four-H working paper are the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service.

A copy of the Four-H working paper released today and various related documents, including a fact sheet on the options and the integrated alternatives, can be found on the National Marine Fisheries Service's Web site at www.nwr.noaa.gov or on the Federal Caucus Web site at www.bpa.gov/federalcaucus

###